DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 126 456 CS 002 819

AUTHOR Pellowski, Anne
TITLE Can Children's Literature Bring Peace?
INSTITUTION Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Tehran (Iran).; Iranian Commission for UNESCO, Tehran.; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Paris (France).
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Children's Literature in the Service of International Understanding and Peaceful Co-operation (Tehran, May 15-21, 1975); Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Books; *Childrens Literature; Conference Reports; Cultural Exchange; Cultural Factors; *Cultural Interrelationships; *Global Approach; *Peace

ABSTRACT

This paper, presented at a special meeting held in Tehran, discusses whether children's books can promote peace and analyzes several titles according to a theory of moral development evolved by Lawrence Kohlberg. Included are a list of programs in the United States that directly relate to peace education for children and a list of special education programs that show how to achieve empathy for others and how global interdependence works. (JM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED126456

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE SERVICE OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING AND PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION

ORGANIZED BY THE
INSTITUTE FOR THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS
IN COOPERATION WITH UNESCO AND THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO IN IRAN

15-21 MAY 1975 , TEHRAN

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CS 002 819

Children's Literature in the Service of International Understanding and Peaceful Co-operation

Tehran, 15-21 May 1975

Can children's literature bring peace?

ANNE PELLOWSKI (U.S.A.)

Before an international group can talk about which children's books promote peace and understanding and how they do it, one must have some general acceptance as to what is meant by the term peace. Using the widest range of dictionary definitions, one could say that peace is the absence of mental or physical conflict and the presence of harmony among, and tolerance for, other ideas and other persons. Generally, it is believed that an active search for the conditions of harmony and tolerance will result in the absence, or at least the lessening, of mental or physical conflict. A few persons would say that it is sufficient to insist on the absence of conflict, and the presence of harmony will then necessarily follow. In any case, harmony and tolerance for others are not easy to achieve at the family level, the group level, the state or nation level.

Do we think it possible to teach children some basic methods for achieving harmony and tolerance? Must such teaching be done chiefly by direct adult example and by opportunity for children to experience harmony and tolerance in their environment, or can it also be done through abstract examples experienced second-hand by children, through books, films and television?

To answer this, I think we must first try to discover how the child acquires his sense of moral judgement. It will be this sense that determines whether the child perceives something as "good" or "bad", and,

utlimately, it will dicate to the child to act in harmony or in conflict with the world and the people in it.

Working from theories of Piaget, Dewey and other educators and psychologists, Lawrence Kohlberg has evolved a theory of the development of moral judgement that has three general levels, with two stages to each level. Stated briefly, they are:

Level 1

Pre-Conventional

"Good" or "bad" are

defined only in terms of

physical consequence.

Stage 1 - Characterized by unquestioning deference to superior physical power; good is defined as being the avoidance of "bad" acts.

Stage 2 - Right action consists of that which satisfies one's own needs, and only occasionally the needs of others; fairness, equality and reciprocity are present only pragmatically, as they affect one's own part in any action.

Level 2

Conventional

There is active support

for the fixed rules or

authority of any society.

Stage 3- Pleasing others and gaining approval is preceived as the "good" moral thing to do. There is conformity to the majority behavior and that behavior will sometimes be judged by the intention of the doer rather than by the outcome.

Stage 4 - The highest good is doing one's duty, showing respect for authority and maintaining the prevalent social order.

Level 3

Post - Conventional

Development of autonomous moral principles with their own validity apart from established authority.

Stage 5 - Right action is defined in terms of individual rights but critically agreed upon by the whole society; awareness of relativism of personal values creates an emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus; stress is on legal point of view but with possibility of changing laws.

Stage 6 - Right is based on principles that appeal to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency; principles are abstract and

ethical and include justice, the reciprocity and equality of human rights and respect fro individuals.

Kohlberg and his associates have tested out this model on large numbers of children and adults in quite a number of societies, ranging from highly industralized to completely rural or nomadic. While there was a wide range of different ages for reaching the various stages (and then sometimes reverting back to an earlier stage) there appeared to be the same type of progression in all societies. In other words, most persons passed through each of the stages in the order given above, however brief the time for remaining in any given stage. Most persons perceived the "best" type of moral persons as those in the stage coming immediately after the one they were in. In general, there were more 13-year-olds in stage three than in any other stage.

The above gives only the briefest summary of some very wide-ranging research. There are, of course, many questions raised by certain aspects of the stages. For purposes of this discussion, let us accept as generally valid the statement that by age thirteen the majority of children (more than 50%) are in stage three and have passed through stages one and two during earlier years. This allows for a large group of exceptions.

Let us also, for the sake of discussion, accept as valid the premise that most of these children will perceive "goodness" or "the best" as those principles stated in Stage 4, i.e., the highest good is doing one's duty, showing respect for authority and maintaining the prevalent

social order. Stage 5 and 6, then, are almost without meaning for the person in Stage 3 - indeed, that person might perceive someone operating in Stage 6 as "bad" or "evil" or "not good."

Carrying these stages over into children's literature, one would then have to conclude that the most effective stories for most children under thirteen (always making some exceptions) are with characters whose actions are clearly defined as "good" or "bad" within the constraints of Stage 1 through 4. If the stories have characters who operate by the principles of Stage 5 or 6, these principles will not be evident to most children under 13. They might like the story for the sake of its narrative power and action, but they will not perceive the characters as "good" or "bad" in the same way they would do so for Stage 1 through 4.

Because I have had extensive experience in reading and telling stories to large numbers of children (in groups of all types and sizes) I thought it would be interesting to attempt an after-the-fact appraisal of the books and stories I have used most frequently, to see if the actions of the characters fall into the stages that roughly match the ages and stages of the children I had dealt with. It must be stated at the outset that while I have carefully kept records of the books and stories I have used and the age and numbers of children present, this is not a scientifically structured experiment, because it relies entirely on my memory to recall the responses of the children. Usually, my goals in reading or telling stories to children were

To entertain

To inspire with a certain emotion or feeling

To inform about a special event or explain an idea

To tell about the past, especially as it relates to the present

To anticipate the future

To give children an opportunity to participate in a group listening experience.

In the past years I have added another specific goal:

To directly point out the likeness and differences in children everywhere, and to create a tolerance for differences, for ambiguity and for other points of view.

Some of the books I have used over and over again are listed in the bibliography at the end, but there are others not included because they are not related to the subject of peace. For the youngest children under age six, this would include such favorites as the Madeline books of Ludwig Bemelmans, Harry the Dirty Dog by Margaret Boly (and its sequels), the Curious George books of H. A. Rey, The story about Ping by Marjorie Flack, and the many picture books of Leslie Brooke, Marie Hall Ets, Don Freeman, Wanda Gag, Paul Galdone, Ezra Jack Keats, and Maurice Sendak.

Analyzing these books in the light of Kohlberg's theory, I found that most of them fell into Stage 3. That is, their central characters might have been "naughty" or "bad" in the earlier parts of the story, but they ended up with conformity to the majority behavior, and aimed at

approval by pleasing others. A number of them were at Stage 1 or 2, and a few were also at Stage 4. But I could find no ready example of picture books that I had used extensively with young children, in which the central theme or message of the story could be said to fall primarily into Stage 5 and 6. My conclusion is that in the area of picture books for the young child (a field in which the U.S. has a particularly rich children's literature) there has been a symbiotic relationship between author/artist and users of the books, so that the most popular and lasting books and those most aesthetically and morally satisfying to young children, have indeed reflected the moral stage at which these children are, for the most part.

Of course, it must be stated immediately that ther are categories of children's books that teach numbers, the alphabet, color and shape concepts, etc., and do so without the framework of a story, so there are few moral values present. There is also the category of nonsense rhymes, so popular with the young child, in which all values are suspended. Any person working with young children soon realizes that one must have a generous mix of all types, in order to satisfy the wide range of interests in any given group of children under six. The author or artist who wishes to produce a story with a moral of peace and harmony for the age group, would do well to study the models that have worked successfully in other countries and would do well also to spend time observing children as they respond to stories and pictures.

With the age group between six and nine, I have generally used picture books with a more extended text, and some stories told orally.

unaccompanied by pictures. At this age, I have found that folk and fairy tales, myths and legends and stories with unusual backgrounds are more likely to excite interest when told orally. Some often-used titles are the fairy-tale picture books of the Swiss illustrator Felix Hoffman and those of Marcia Brown, the Little Tim book by the British writer-illustrator Edward Ardizzone, the Happy Lion series by Louise Fatio and Roger Duvoisin, Buttons by Tom Robinson, and the titles mentioned in the bibliography at the end. Since the children in this age group are usually learning to read, and seem to prefer present-day stories for their first reading experiences, I avoided using this type of story for storytelling or Picture Book Hours.

Here again, it is rare for the stories to transcend Stage 4 of moral development. More often than not, the moral background is accepted as being entirely conventional, with large doses of Stage 1 (right makes might) and Stage 2 (hedonism) carrying over from the earlier stages of history, when they probably were the conventional morality.

About the only references to a "higher order" are to be found in the myths and legends. Here, the young child is sometimes presented with beings who live up to principles that are not explainable in conventional terms. One thinks immediately of the legend of John Henry as well as some of the stories of the Old Testament, and a few of those from Hindu and Buddhist sources. So, more often than not, the child probably identifies this "call to higher moral action" as a religious act, rather than as a social act. I do not wish to get into discussion of religious values at this time, so we'll have to leave this point hanging, at least

for the moment.

With the age group between nine and twelve, I have used almost exclusively the orally-told story, and, of course, have observed the reactions of many children who read stories on their own at this level. In reviewing the stories I have used or recommended most frequently, I have found that, without a doubt, there are a significant number that reflect the moral values of Stage 5 and 6, at least in part. I cannot say whether this merely reflects my personal choices of moral values to be emphasized and emulated, or whether it came about because I selected stories that I knew would be enjoyed by children of this age, and by happenstance, some were permeated with the values of autonomous moral principles. I have only to think of such stories as "The Seventh Princess" by Eleanor Farjeon and the Chinese tale of "Two of Everything" as recorded by Alice Ritchie, to realize that they are among the stories I have told most frequently to older children and adults, and they most decidedly promote a post-conventional moral order.

Reviewing objectively the comments of children in this age group about the books they themselves were reading, I would again have to concede that the great majority that are like and found satisfying are filled with conventional morality, and often even pre-conventional morality. Only in the hands of such skilled writers as E.B. White and Laura Ingalls Wilder do we have stories that include characters who respond to moral values at all six stages, and intimate to children that the "best" characters are those who are past conventional morality, and yet do not undermine it. It is a tribute to the talent of such

writers that they can bring children to an appreciation of the highest human values, while telling an engrossing story. There are very few writers, anywhere, who have achieved this.

As I mentioned earlier, in the past few years I have added one specific goal to the programs I have given for children, namely,

> To directly point out the likeness and differences in children everywhere, and to create a tolerence for differences, for ambiguity, and for other points of view.

I have tried out materials on some 10,000 children in this period, and have trained a number of other librarians and teachers to do similar programs. Basically, the conclusions I have come to include the following:

1.) It is better to introduce and explain outward differences with children under six, because they have almost no tolerance for the abstract, inner differences. For example, it is possible to read aloud the picture story Shobhana, produced in India, and they will accept the dress, the camel walking in the streets, the different-sounding names, often with few questions, because they are reassured by the homely familiarity of having to watch out in the streets for traffic. This is a lesson very familiar to them, and everything in the book conspires to reassure them that it may look very different, but children in India have the same hard lessons to learn. What cannot (and I firmly believe shouldt not) be introduced easily is the Hindu significance of the cow and at the end. The "surprise" ending will have quite a different inner meaning for the Indian child and for the Western child, as it should

have. In my view, it would be unwise to discuss at all (with the Western child under age 6) the special significance of the cow and calf, unless a question were directly asked by one of the children.

During the past year I selected 25 picture story books from other countries. They were used throughout the year with a group of three, four, and five-year-old children in a pre-school center in Milwaukee. They were interespersed with stories that showed throughly American and European situations and families of all types. They were not introduced in any special way, except to identify their place of origin. Almost all of the stories were well-liked by the children, but the ones liked best of all were those in which the central characters did things that were thoroughly familiar to the children, even though the manner of doing them might have been different. For example, stories having to do with eating, with animal pets, with parental approval or disapproval, with play among friends or brothers and sisters - all of these situations were recognized and liked by the children, even though the pictures (and sometimes the vocabulary) contained elements completely unfamiliar. In general, I have found these present-day stories set in other lands to be more successful than the picture stories that show historical settings.

2.) My first recommendation, then, for any nation trying to establish a children's literature is to develop the local and national literature, especially that based on existing oral sources, and then to add to that, simple stories of the present day, set in that country and in other countries, but dealing with universal themes. If it proves too costly to translate and reprint such stories, copies of the original

books should be imported and used with an oral translation, as is frequently done among the Scandinavian countries. This limits such books to institutional use, with groups of children, but I am convinced that some introduction to the wider world at large is necessary for all the children in this world, just as soon as they have become reasonably secure and assured of the dimensions of their own world.

I believe these early books should avoid too much of the historical aspects of stories, because of the unusual perception of time by the young child. Animal stories set in no particular era or society are good, but in my view they should then be locally re-illustrated.

3.) For the children over six but under nine, I remain convinced that the best introductions to other peoples and their literature are the folk tales, the myths and the legends, but they should not be used to the exclusion of all present-day stories. Somehow, we are going to have to retrain our teachers, everywhere, to become familiar with a wider variety of this type of world literature because it is unlikely that enough parents and grandparents will ever acquire the knowledge and experience to introduce it to their children. They are even giving up on introducing their own oral literature in this way, to the present generation of children.

In my view, we are dealing with humankind's most basic need for communicating with and explaining his world, when we deal with the folk tales and myths that have survived a long time. I can attest to the power of these stories, even for modern chidren. It is true that many of them are full of violence, and nationalistic feeling. However, I have

found quite a number that deal with such basic needs as food, shelter, and love, or that try to explain physical phenomena in unusual ways, and in these cases the more usual response is one of respect and wonder. So, my recommendation is to search for those folk tales, myths and legends that best exemplify the human person's response to the social, natural and supernatural world as it has evolved in different parts of the universe, and to hone and perfect these stories with constant retelling and new illustrations. A few of my personal favorites are listed in the bibliography. Accompanying the use of these should be a wide variety of stories set in the present day and dealing with the joys and sorrows, the escapes and adventures, the humor and boredom, the usual and unusual in the lives of children everywhere. However, in most cases, these stories should not aim at introducing high-minded values. Rather, they should have as their principle goals to entertain and to satisfy the curiosity of the young mind. The values in the stories should be consistent with the conventional values of the society to which they are being introduced, but they should be subtly stated, intrinsically present, and a natural expression of the beliefs of the writer.

4.) Finally, for children over nine, I recommend the stories of present day, of the historical past, of fantasy worlds and allegorical situations that begin to intimate what might be called comic consciousness or harmonious global understanding. The characters in these stories might well be operating at the conventional moral stage, but some sudden action lifts them beyond their level and enables them to show,

or at least hint at, the universal principles of justice, reciprocity, and respect for human rights. I list a few that qualify, in my view, in the bibliography. When we will have a sufficient number of such stories, well-written and well-illustrated, and when most parents and teachers will use them as the models for the heroes and heroines for the young, and when most films and television programs will use them as the source of their story material, then, perhaps, we might achieve some peace through children's literature.

APPENDIX

The current edition of the Encyclopedia of Associations (E.M.Hale) lists some 50 organizations and agencies in the U.S. that are related to peace or world order. I would like to review quickly only those that have nation-wide programs that directly relate to peace education for children, or offer specific advice on how to teach peace to children. Most of them aim their information and publicity efforts at adults, but this does not mean they do not wish to have children affected by their work.

1. Another Mother for Peace
   407 N. Maple Drive
   Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210
   Membership: 185,000 mothers and their children.
   No fixed publications aimed at children, but recommends many in their newsletter; urges parents to actively teach peace to their children.

2. Association for Childhood Education International, ACEI
   3615 Wisconsin Ave., NW
   Washington, D.C. 20016
   Membership: approx. 50,000 educators, mainly interested in early childhood education.
   Publications and programs related to peace education: Children and War, compiled by Norma R. Law $.35 (contains a bibliography).

3. Center for War/Peace Studies
   (Will be known as Center for Global Perspectives in Education as of July, 1975)
   218 E. 18th St.

New York, NY 10003

No membership.

Publications and programs related to peace education: Numerous teaching units and short lists.

4.) Institute for World Order

1140 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10036

No membership.

Publications and programs related to peace education: Ways and means of teaching about world order, published several times a year; $2.00 annual mailing fee for that and other related materials.

5.) Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

1213 Race St.

Philadelphia, PA 19107

Membership: not known.

Publications and programs related to peace education:

Building Blocks for Peace (Pre-School & Kindergarten) $2.00.

Peace Is In Our Hands (Grades 1-6, ages 6-11) $5.00.

Learning Peace (Grades 7-12, ages 12-17) $3.00.

Each resource unit was compiled by teachers who had tried out the methods and materials.

With the Jane Addams Peace Foundation, they jointly sponsor the Jane Addams Peace Award.

All of these above recommend any good children's books and other materials on the subject of peace, when they find out about them.

In addition, there are quite a number of agencies and organizations that promote education for global understanding. These groups have a slightly different approach. Generally, they take the position that says: some of the conditions of peace are that peoples must have empathy for others: that we realize that the earth is an interlocking system of resources which must be shared equally; that we recognize the many degrees of interdependency that nations and peoples already have in relation to each other. Before we can teach about peace, then, we must show clearly how to achieve empathy for others, and how global interdependence works in some cases. Some of the special education programs that aim to do this are:

1.) African-American Institute
School Services Program
833 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

2.) Asia Society
Education Program
112 E. 64th St.
New York, NY 10021

3.) National Education Association
International Education Department
1270 Avenue of Americas
New York, NY 10020

4.) National Council for the Social Studies
1201 16th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

5.) Social Sciences Education Consortium, Inc.
855 Broadway
Boulder, Colorado 80302

6.) U.S. Committee for UNICEF
School Services Department and the Information
Center on Children's Cultures
331 East 38th St.
New York, New York 10016

7.) U.S. Commission for UNESCO
Associated schools project
Dept. of State
Washington, D.C.